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**PROSPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES
OF ARAB UNITY MOVES**

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Department of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff.

Concurred in by

INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On 20 February 1958, the following members of the Intelligence and Research Department of Staff, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence Department of the Army, the Director of Naval Intelligence, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence USAF, and the Deputy Director for Intelligence of the Joint Staff of the Atomic Energy Commission, Representative to the IAC, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained. The subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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PROSPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ARAB UNITY MOVES

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the prospects and implications of the Syrian-Egyptian union and the Iraq-Jordan federation.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Both the Syro-Egyptian union and the Iraq-Jordan federation, although influenced by long-range developments and plans, came into being to meet immediate political needs. Nasser probably agreed to go forward with the union at this time because he was convinced that it was necessary in order to forestall a Communist takeover in Syria, as well as because he saw a propitious moment for realization of long-laid plans on his own terms. The federation was created to counter the anti-conservative pressures generated by the union throughout the Arab world.¹ (Paras. 8, 24-25)

2. The persistent and widespread appeal among Arabs of the concept of Arab unity was the foundation upon which both the union and federation were constructed. Of the two, the union, under Nasser, the leader and symbol of Arab radical nationalism, almost certainly has a greater

popular appeal in the whole area, and will exert a continuing attraction upon the radical elements in the conservative states. The creation of the two groupings emphasizes the polarization of the area between radical and conservative forces and the contest for area leadership between Egypt and Iraq will be stimulated. Since both groupings proclaim the idea of Arab unity, surface cordiality may be maintained, but at least covert hostile activities are likely between them. (Paras. 11-12, 20-21, 32)

3. Nasser will face formidable problems in keeping the union together and maintaining stability within the two component states, but we believe that the union can carry through for at least a year or so on its present momentum. If Nasser were removed from the scene within this period, Egypt and Syria would probably revert to their independent status. It is unlikely that conservative forces would then succeed to power in either state and any successor regimes

¹The word "union" will hereinafter be used to refer to the Syro-Egyptian union, officially known as the United Arab Republic. The word "federation" will refer to the Iraq-Jordan federation.

would be likely to adopt a neutralist foreign policy. (*Paras. 13-19*)

4. The Iraq-Jordan federation will also have serious internal problems, principally due to the radical Arab nationalist orientation of Jordan's ex-Palestinian population and to Jordan's economic problems. If the federation survives its initial difficulties, however, and is able to capitalize on the economic resources of Iraq, its long term prospects would be favorable. (*Paras. 28-30*)

5. The creation of the two Arab groupings increases Israel's apprehensions with respect to the eventuality of military action. (*Para. 38*)

6. Intrinsicly, the principle of Arab unity is no more favorable to Soviet than to Western interests. We believe that, although the Soviets suffered tactical reverses in Syria, they will adapt their pol-

icy to the situation and seek to use the union as a bridge to Africa and a means of weakening the conservative states. While the Soviets are likely to take much the same attitude toward the federation as do the leaders of the union, they will covertly seek to undermine the conservative regimes. (*Paras. 39-40*)

7. The success of the Iraq-Jordan federation will probably depend heavily upon US diplomatic and material support. Overt US hostility to the Syro-Egyptian union would almost certainly strengthen the union. On the other hand, public expression of US support for the idea of Arab unity, coupled with a relaxation of overt pressures upon Nasser, might influence Nasser to bring the Syro-Egyptian union into a more truly neutral position and might produce a more favorable area reaction to discreet US support of the Iraq-Jordan federation. (*Paras. 41-44*)

DISCUSSION

I. PROSPECTS FOR THE SYRO-EGYPTIAN UNION

8. *Origins of Agreement on Union:* We believe that the direct impetus for Egyptian-Syrian union came from the radical-nationalist, neutralist elements in Syria centered in the Arab Socialist Resurrectionist Party (ASRP). The leaders of this party and their military allies (Lt. Col. Sarraj, etc.) apparently felt that the extreme pro-Soviet group in Syria could only be checked by assistance from Nasser. They called for union with Egypt—a proposal of long standing with great appeal for Arab nationalists in Syria and one which the pro-Soviets could not openly oppose without serious risk—in effect asking for Nasser's direct intervention to salvage their position. Nasser, who had long been moving in the direction of union with Syria, had postponed final involvement in

union because of the practical problems. Nasser agreed to go forward at this time, probably because he had been convinced that union was necessary to forestall a Communist takeover in Syria and because he saw a propitious moment for realization of long-laid plans on his own terms.

9. *Nature of the Union:* Only the broad outlines of the plan for union have been worked out. Nasser's announcement on 5 February on the union constitution emphasized the authority of the President and the separation of the domestic affairs of Egypt and Syria. Nasser, who is the only candidate for the union Presidency, is granted nearly absolute powers until he decides to terminate the so-called transition period. He is to appoint all members of the joint parliament and cabinet, as well as the members of the two executive

councils which will handle the domestic affairs of Egypt and Syria respectively. Syrian political parties are to be abolished and replaced by a single official party, the National Union, with Nasser at its head. Within Syria Nasser is likely to try to exercise control through the ASRP, although officially dissolved, and its allies in the Syrian army. It is likely that he will dominate the joint institutions of government and that his voice will be decisive in matters of foreign policy and defense.

10. While union will be publicly emphasized, the two states are likely to retain separate internal administrations. Nasser will probably do his best to see that the governmental institutions of the union avoid any appearance of interfering in the domestic affairs of the separate states. He is likely to be cautious about hasty or over-ambitious projects for amalgamation, particularly those which might give rise to the suspicion that Egypt is benefitting from the union at the cost of Syria.

11. *Public Reactions:* At least at the outset the union will enjoy considerable popular support. While many politically articulate Syrians may have reservations with regard to a union which gives preponderance to Egypt, most of them are likely to approve it at this time, if only because it appears to constitute the most effective means of thwarting the bid of the pro-Soviet and Communist group for control. Most politically articulate Egyptians will probably also accept the union.

12. Minorities, many commercial interests, conservative elements, and perhaps some military groups are probably dissatisfied with the union but are likely to withhold criticism, at least in the initial stages. Later, however, as their special interests are encroached upon they may risk more open criticism. Businessmen, for instance, are likely to blame any economic difficulties upon the union. Also, in the course of time, many Syrian politicians, local notables, officers in the armed forces, civil servants and other persons who have held positions of authority are likely to become increasingly resentful of Egyptian domination of the union government. The Christian,

Druze, Kurd, and Alawite minority elements will continue fearful of being overwhelmed by the dominant Moslem majority in the Arab unity movement.

13. *Internal Problems:* Despite the generally favorable popular response to the union and to Nasser's leadership, he will have serious problems in giving substance to the union. Although he will seek to keep his intervention in Syrian domestic affairs to a minimum, he will probably become involved in matters which many Syrians consider to be of purely Syrian domestic concern.

14. One of the first problems that will confront Nasser is that of establishing his authority both over the pro-Soviet group in the coalition and over the Syrian Communist Party. The leaders of the pro-Soviet group, Deputy Prime Minister Azm and the Chief of Staff, Major General Bizri, while supporting the general idea of Arab unity, have privately opposed the present union since it threatens their personal ambitions. Their recent behavior indicates that they will seek to avoid an open break with Nasser and are likely to try to come to terms with him. Nasser on his part may attempt to compromise with them for the time being. The Syrian Communist Party, while paying lip service to Arab unity, is opposed to an Egyptian-dominated union, particularly because of Nasser's attitude toward local communist parties. We believe it likely that Nasser will decide that he must reduce drastically the influence of the Syrian Communist Party. He is probably now in a position to do this. However, Nasser probably cannot eliminate the Party and may wish to eliminate all members of the pro-Soviet group. Accordingly, both the Party and other pro-Soviet elements will remain a potentially formidable force in Syrian affairs.

15. Nasser will probably also have serious difficulties in obtaining effective control over the army and the faction-ridden political scene in Syria. Despite the agreement of all political parties, with the exception of the Communists, to disband and join a national union party, jockeying for position will continue along old party lines. To the existing factionalism in the Syrian Army will be added

Syrian-Egyptian rivalry for key posts and advancement in the armed forces. Many Syrian army officers fear the possibility of complete integration of Syria and Egyptian forces, believing that in a united army most of the important positions would go to Egyptians.

16. Egypt and Syria do not have complementary economies and, apart from the union's control of oil transit facilities, there is little prospect for mutually advantageous economic cooperation. Thus such measures of economic integration as Nasser might attempt would probably lead to conflict and criticism of the union. The union adds the oil pipelines to Nasser's control of the Suez Canal, thus giving him potential economic and political leverage over the producing states as well as over the Western oil consumers.

17. We believe that Nasser and the Syrian nationalists have now become so committed to the union that they cannot retreat without disastrous consequences to themselves. We do not believe that Nasser can solve the many problems with which he is confronted or that he can significantly improve conditions of life within Egypt or Syria. However, he will have to meet only the lowest standard of performance and we believe that the union can carry through for at least a year or so on its present momentum.

18. In a year or so, however, the problems of internal organization and control are likely to pile up and large numbers of Egyptians and Syrians are likely to have real and pressing grievances against the union regime. In time opposition groups might develop, particularly in Syria, which would seek to overthrow the Nasser regime. It is not possible at this time to foresee the exact composition or political orientation of such groups either in Egypt or Syria. They might be more moderate than the Nasser regime, but they would almost certainly still be Arab nationalist in character and favor Arab unity and neutralism.

19. If Nasser were to disappear from the scene, the union would probably collapse and Egypt and Syria would probably revert to their independent status. Even in this case it is unlikely that conservative forces would

succeed to power in either country. Even if they did they would be unlikely to accept an open alliance with the West.

II. EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE SYRO-EGYPTIAN UNION

20. The idea of expansion is inherent in Syro-Egyptian union. Indeed, the union's very existence has already increased, and will continue to heighten, the pressure being exerted against the conservative Arab governments.

21. Union leaders will take advantage of the initial impact of the union to excite public opinion in the conservative Arab states. Although plans for the union provide for the loose association of other states, we do not believe the union leadership is likely to press immediately for the adherence of other Arab countries. The union leaders will be deterred by the practical problems of amalgamation and by the danger of provoking a hostile reaction from the West and Israel, as well as from the Iraq-Jordan federation, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon. Negotiations have been underway in Cairo between representatives of Yemen and Egypt looking toward Yemen's joining the union. It is probable that some arrangement will be concluded in the near future, although the relationship between Yemen and the union is likely to be *pro forma*.

22. If, however, the Western powers should adopt an openly hostile attitude toward the union its appeal to Arab nationalists everywhere would be enhanced. The Egyptian and Syrian leaders as well as the Soviet Union would probably exploit this hostility to "legitimate Arab aspirations" through propaganda and subversive activities in an effort to cow and possibly even to overthrow the conservative Arab regimes. Were their own internal problems to become unduly troublesome, the union leaders might well try to blame their difficulties upon intrigues of the conservative Arab leaders and the West, thereby attempting to arouse popular hostility toward the "foes of Arab unity." The union leaders are unlikely in any event to adhere to any timetable for bringing the other Arab states into the union, but will seize opportunities as they arise.

23. With respect to the rest of the world, the union leaders are likely to follow the policy of "positive neutralism" as expounded by Nasser. They will continue to rely upon the Soviet Bloc for extensive military and economic assistance. At the same time, they are likely to try to balance Soviet influence by improving relations with the West. They will seek to persuade the Western powers to accept their neutralist position, expand trade, and provide economic assistance as a counterweight to Soviet activity. Toward this end, Nasser is likely initially to follow a conciliatory policy toward the West, seeking to allay hostility and establish the respectability of the union. The union leadership, however, will remain basically suspicious of the West and will find continual grounds for hostility in such issues as Israel, the Baghdad Pact, and the Algeria problem.

III. CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATE REACTIONS

24. *Initial Reactions:* The governments of Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq immediately recognized the Syro-Egyptian union as a serious threat to their positions and to the status quo in the area.

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B3 [REDACTED] The Lebanese government was deeply disturbed by the implications of the union and cast about for means of answering its challenge. All three of these governments approached the US for advice and assistance. King Saud is apprehensive of the implications of the union but is disinclined to join a counter-grouping. He might, however, give financial support, at least, to opposition groups within the union. Saud is particularly disturbed by the implications of Yemen's association with the union and may take steps to undermine the Yemen's regime. All the conservative Arab states have avoided open opposition to the union. Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia have publicly expressed their approval.

25. *The Iraq-Jordan Federation:* On 14 February in Amman King Feisal of Iraq and King Hussein of Jordan signed an agreement joining their two countries in a federation.

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[REDACTED] Details of federation have not been settled and the parties have yet to write a constitution and work out a plan for implementation. Nevertheless, it appears that both have sacrificed a number of the normal attributes of sovereignty and that Iraq has assumed heavy responsibilities.

26. King Feisal is to be head of the federation, with Hussein as his deputy and acting in his absence. There is to be a legislative council, half to be appointed by the parliaments of each country. The federation is to have a single foreign minister, a single finance minister, and a single minister of national economy. There will also be a joint cabinet to be appointed by means not yet determined. The armed forces of the two countries will be united. On the other hand, each King is to remain on the throne in his own country and the governmental machinery of the two states will continue to function in matters of domestic concern. Presumably, each state will have its own Prime Minister, cabinet, and parliament as before.

27. In foreign affairs the federation is to act as a single state. Although the Iraqis are likely to dominate in this as in other fields of joint endeavor, they are unlikely to have the clear and overwhelming preponderance that Nasser will enjoy in the foreign affairs of the Syro-Egyptian union. There are also certain problems, particularly with respect to Jordan's border with Israel and the Palestinian refugees, in which Jordan's interest is different from Iraq's.

28. A basic problem in foreign policy is that of Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact. The negotiators of the federation arrived at a compromise by which each member state will be bound only by its pre-existing international commitments. Iraq has agreed to reconsider its position in the Baghdad Pact in 1960, when the time comes for extension of its present membership. Should Nuri return to the Iraqi Prime Ministry, as we now believe likely, his very presence symbolizing as it does Iraqi membership in the Pact will give additional ammunition to the enemies of the Iraq-

Jordan federation. There will be continuing pressures for Iraq to resign, from within Iraq itself, from Jordan, and from other Arab nations.

29. There will probably be a large measure of political agreement between the ruling groups of the two states largely because they have perceived in federation a means of bolstering their positions. However, the federation will not solve the most important domestic problems in either of the states and, indeed, may make some of them more serious. The radical nationalists in Iraq, while unenthusiastic about the federation, will probably not create a serious problem of security for the government. The principal threat to the position of the Jordanian Government will continue to come from the Palestinian population of the West Bank. The Palestinians will probably oppose the federation in principle, but so long as Nasser continues to take a friendly attitude they are likely to remain quiescent. Should the Syro-Egyptian union become hostile to the federation, or should Nasser privately urge the Palestinians to do so, they would probably stage a determined drive to disrupt the federation, or possibly to join the union.

30. There is no clear picture of the federation's economic plans, although amalgamation of the two economies, the finances and development plans of the two governments appears to have been agreed upon, in principle at least, at Amman. Because Iraq's is a growing economy with great potential based on its natural resources in oil and undeveloped land, and because Jordan's economy is generally agreed not to be viable, amalgamation would benefit Jordan and impose burdens upon Iraq. The federation does have greater potential for economic development than the Syro-Egyptian union due to the natural resources of Iraq and to the geographical contiguity of Iraq and Jordan.

31. *Consequences of the Iraq-Jordan Federation:* As in the case of the Syro-Egyptian union, the very fact of union between Iraq and Jordan has significant implications. The influence of the federation will, of course, depend upon the degree of success with which it is administered, but, as in the case of the

Syro-Egyptian union, high standards of accomplishment will not be required. Indications are that the federation leaders will not immediately seek to challenge Nasser and that Nasser is inclined, for the time being at least, to take a tolerant attitude toward the federation. For the federation, like the union, publicly stands for the idea of Arab unity and therefore cannot, initially at least, be attacked too strongly even by the radical nationalists.

32. Nevertheless, even if the appearance of cordiality between the union and the federation prevails on the surface, the creation of the two groupings will emphasize the polarization of the area between radical and conservative forces and between the advocates of "positive neutralism" on the one hand and elements willing to cooperate closely with the West on the other. Thus the contest for area leadership between Egypt and Iraq will be stimulated. Unless it is a patent failure, the federation will probably have the effect of strengthening the political positions of Hussein and Feisal. However, the Iraq-Jordan federation will have much less initial popular support than the Syro-Egyptian union. Whatever its policy and behavior, the federation will be regarded by many inside and outside its boundaries as a Western creation and as basically hostile to the Pan-Arab nationalist cause.

33. *Lebanon:* Lebanon will wish to preserve its special character and economic position. Though it probably favors the federation it is likely to stand aloof, at least until the Syro-Egyptian reaction becomes clear, in the hope that the two groupings will produce an equilibrium in the area.

34. *Saudi Arabia:* Regardless of the federation's apparent success or failure and of the Syro-Egyptian reaction, King Saud is likely to remain aloof. He will probably feel that his own influence and position will best be served by continuing the general orientation of his foreign policy toward the US and the states of the federation. While seeking to remain on the best possible terms with the Syro-Egyptian union, he will attempt to influence Yemen away from the union.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNION AND FEDERATION FOR OTHER NATIONS

35. *Reaction of the Other Baghdad Pact Nations:* The Baghdad Pact nations have been concerned by the formation of the Syro-Egyptian union, but will probably take no military counter-action.

[REDACTED]

36. At the same time, the Baghdad Pact nations have welcomed the Iraq-Jordan federation, although they are somewhat concerned by the fact that Iraq is now under pressure to withdraw from the pact. Although all the Baghdad Pact members would be disturbed by Iraqi withdrawal from the pact, they would be likely to acquiesce in such withdrawal if it appeared necessary to maintain and strengthen the federation, and particularly if it were accompanied by US adherence to the Pact.

[REDACTED]

38. *Israeli Reaction:* The union of Egypt and Syria, followed by the federation of Iraq and Jordan, sharpens some of Israel's problems. The two Arab groups will be tempted to court popular favor by vying with one another in the expression of anti-Israeli sentiment. This will, for some time at least, still further re-

duce the chances of an Arab-Israeli settlement. It may also increase Israeli apprehensions and make preventive military action more likely. Should the Palestinian element in Jordan succeed in breaking away from the control of the Jordanian Government and attempt to enter the union, Israel would almost certainly intervene militarily. If a breakdown of order led to a general scramble for Jordanian territory, Israeli armed forces would also become involved. On the other hand, Israel almost certainly realizes that an attack on either group would risk bringing in the other, as well as alienating world opinion and risking unfavorable reaction in the UN. We believe that, despite the increase in Arab capabilities resulting from the recent mergers, it will be a considerable time before these capabilities are sufficient to overthrow the state of Israel. However, Israel's estimate of the Arab threat will almost certainly be more alarmist than our own.

39. *The Soviet Position:* The victory of the ASRP-Nasser forces over the Soviet Bloc's principal friends and advocates in Syria was probably regarded by the Soviets as at least a temporary tactical reverse. However, they may believe that the Syro-Egyptian union can be made useful to them as a bridge to Africa and a means of weakening the conservative Arab states. It now appears likely that the Soviet Union will give public support to the union and that it will continue to offer the union the various types of assistance which it previously gave to the two states separately. The Soviets will seek to maintain their capabilities for subversive activity in Syria and at least covertly to keep the Syrian Communist Party in being. They will continue to encourage the anti-Western tendencies of Arab nationalism. They will seek to guide the union toward closer association with the Bloc.

40. The Soviets are likely to regard the Iraq-Jordan federation as an instrument of Western policy. They are likely, however, overtly at least, to take much the same attitude toward the federation as the leaders of the Syro-Egyptian union in order to stay within the bounds of the general Soviet policy of avoid-

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[REDACTED]

ing the appearance of interfering in Arab affairs. They will covertly seek to undermine the conservative regimes, while giving as much encouragement as possible to radical Arab nationalists in the two federated kingdoms.

41. *Consequences of Alternative US Courses of Action:* The current US non-committal posture with respect to the Syro-Egyptian union has probably encouraged Nasser to assume a conciliatory and moderate attitude. Union leaders will probably seek more overt recognition by the US of their neutralist stand and ultimately seek economic assistance, which they will justify as a means of combatting Communist influence in the area.

42. Overt US hostility to the Syro-Egyptian union, would almost certainly strengthen the cohesion of the union, for the immediate future at least, and consolidate forces within the two countries behind it. It would also

accentuate domestic tensions in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon.

43. The success of the Iraq-Jordan federation will probably depend heavily upon US diplomatic and material support. However, Arab resentment of outside interference in their affairs makes it possible that such support could become an impediment rather than an asset, if it were too conspicuously displayed. If given quietly, and combined with an impression that the US favored Arab unity moves in general, it would probably greatly strengthen the federation.

44. Public expression of US support for the idea of Arab unity, coupled with a relaxation of current pressures upon Nasser, might influence Nasser to bring the Syro-Egyptian union into a more truly neutral position and might produce a more favorable area reaction to discreet US support of the Iraq-Jordan federation.